

LETTERS

Dear Editor:

I'd like to give a rather general response to the request for reviewer's opinions on the amount of interest each paper might stimulate among the members of the California Botanical Society. I occasionally review manuscripts for *Madroño* and I am interested in new species descriptions. In general, such papers aren't too exciting. Nevertheless, they constitute a significant aspect of systematics and I think *Madroño* should continue to provide a place for such papers, especially when they deal with California taxa. Perhaps more important for CBS's general membership, however, is the role that new species descriptions have for environmentalists. For example, in some papers, the new species is judged by authorities to have a highly restricted range. This information may be quite valuable in future efforts to protect land where the new species grows. Furthermore, brief accounts on how new species were "discovered" also can be exciting illustrations of how interested amateurs can be involved in furthering scientific knowledge of our native flora. Thus, it might be good to actually encourage authors of new species descriptions to include people-oriented and environmental information!

Mark A. Schlessman
Dept. of Biology
Vassar College
Poughkeepsie, NY 12601

COMMENTARY

MESSAGE FROM THE PAST CBS PRESIDENT

It is with great pleasure that I address the membership of the California Botanical Society in this message column that was initiated at the suggestion of Wayne Ferren in our October 1986 issue of *Madroño*.

For decades, our journal has served as the vital organ for disseminating the results of scientific research to our membership. Historical convention and space limitations have all too often precluded commentaries that encourage dialogue or summarize the Society's activities, accomplishments, and aspirations for the future. Due in large part to Ferren's efforts, this is changing in a positive way. In conveying information on the inner workings of our Society, it is my hope that this column will help to serve as a catalyst for more communication and constructive input from our members.

The By-Laws of CBS give us a broad mandate—" . . . to stimulate interest and to further advancement in the entire field of botany especially in the western United States". This charge has rested largely on the shoulders of a cadre of elected and appointed volunteers, the Executive Council, who meet at Berkeley on a monthly basis during the academic year to formulate policy, tend to routine business, and plan for the future. The Council addressed a heavy agenda during the past year. The burdensome task of handling the Society's financial transactions and modest investments required careful consideration. The heavy demands on the CBS Treasurer led to the creation of the new position of Financial Officer. Our incumbent Treasurer, Dr. Cherie L. Wetzel, kindly agreed to continue her long service to the Society by assuming the duties of this new position, and Dr. Thomas F. Daniel accepted an appointment to the Council as our new Treasurer. These changes also forced us to take a closer look at the Society's financial health. The Society's major financial commitment each year is the publication of *Madroño*. Printing costs, however, have escalated an estimated 30% during the last six years. During this time, we have held to a steadfast policy of no dues increases because the Council strongly believed in providing its members with a quality journal at a bargain basement price. We will